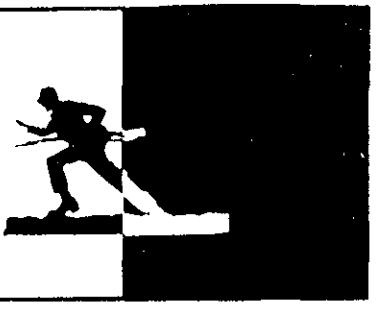
TRAINING NOTES



Execution Matrix

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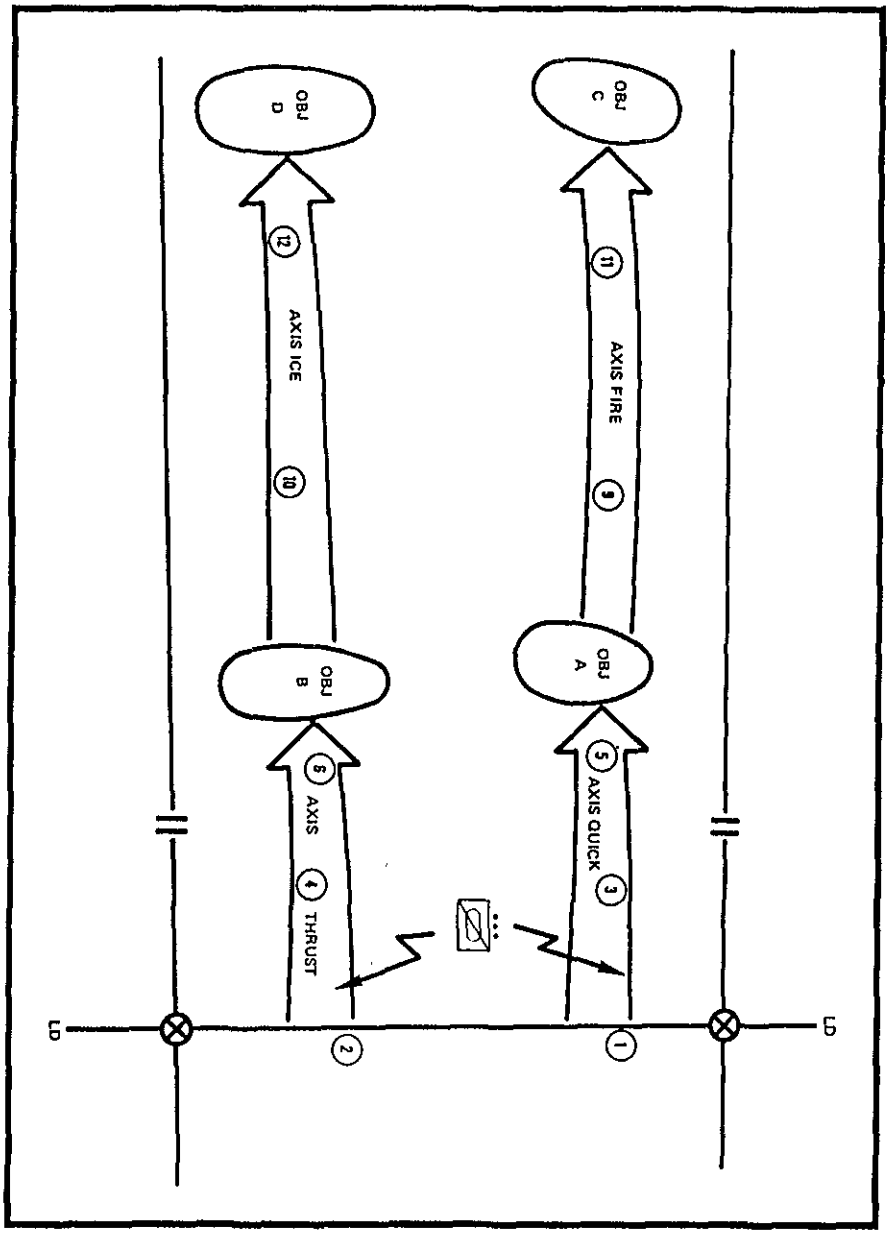
Even a casual reader of the most recent FM 100-5 could not fail to grasp the Army's expectations of what the next war will be like: high intensity, high-speed, non-stop combat operations that push men and equipment to their limit. To win, we will have to think and act faster than our foe. If we are to do that, though, we must first refine our command and control procedures and techniques so that orders can be transmitted to key leaders with little loss of time. An execution matrix is one such technique.

The coordinating draft of FM 71-2 (January 1982) presents the execution matrix as a useful technique for recording defensive "positions and orientations." Once prepared, the matrix is written directly on the operations overlay. Although the matrix technique is not mentioned in connection with offensive operations, it can be readily adapted to the offensive as well, with only minor modification.

The first step is to identify the most common missions and tasks used in offensive operations. Almost all of these can be described with such one-word labels as "attack," "lead," "follow," "overwatch," "secure," and "consolidate." (These labels are placed on the left side of the matrix

EXECUTION MATRIX

	Tm A	Tm TK	Co B	Sct	AT	Hvy Mortar
SCREEN				TF Front		
LEAD	Quick	Fire	Thrust; Ice			
FOLLOW	Fire	Quick				Thrust; Ice
SECURE	Alfa	Charlie	Bravo; Delta			
OVERWATCH					1,3,5 9,11	



when the commander's concept is put in a matrix format.)

Next, graphic control measures that depict in detail the commander's concept are selected. There is nothing new here, just the familiar axes, objectives, checkpoints, phase lines, and the like. For clarity, separate control measures should be used for each sub-unit. Checkpoints, in particular, are flexible, useful control measures, since they have no inherent restrictive meaning, and they can be used to designate overwatch positions, firing points, and on-order axes or boundaries.

On the matrix itself company teams, special platoons, and attachments go across the top. (It isn't necessary to list every special platoon or attachment, although a complete matrix might well do that. But the company teams and the scout platoons, at least, need to be listed.) The tasks that need to be accomplished are then placed along the left side arranged in either chronological order or in any other convenient order. Finally, the control measures appropriate to the unit and the task are entered in the boxes.

An example may help clarify this process. Let's say that we are a task force planning a movement to contact. We are task organized with one tank-heavy and two mechanized infantry-heavy teams. We intend to move on parallel axes with Team A leading on the right, followed by Team Tank with Company B paralleling Team Tank on a different axis. At objective ALFA we'll change lead companies and pass Team Tank through Team A. We'll have the scout platoon screen forward on both axes. The antitank platoon will overwatch from general positions that we have selected on the basis of a map reconnaissance. Finally, the heavy mortar platoon will follow Company B. Graphically, the concept looks like the accompanying sketch, and an execution matrix of this concept would look like the one shown here.

An execution matrix such as this can be constructed quickly and easily. The task organization, the effective time, and the matrix should be written directly on the operation overlay. The result is an overlay that stands alone and presents clearly and concisely the *who, what, where, when,* and *how* of the operation.

In a fast-moving situation, each subordinate commander can be given one overlay and know instantly what he is to do. The same overlay will quickly inform higher, adjacent, and supporting units of the plan. Finally, late arriving attachments can be rapidly briefed on the plan and on their part in it.

The execution matrix won't solve all the problems of command and control in a high-speed operation. It cannot replace a commander's clear presentation of his intent or his concept of the operation. With practice, though, this simple technique can reduce substantially the time required to produce an operation order. And time, as we all know, is often a precious resource.

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